

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

**LISTING OF CLAIMS:**

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A method for merging two rulesets provided in rule-based systems associated with originating applications executing at different locations, each ruleset comprising rules implementing a policy in potential conflict with each other, and each ruleset being in a different rule format, said method comprising:

a) communicating said rulesets to be merged over a distributed network to an assimilator service device for receiving each said ruleset;

b) providing a merge policy to said assimilator device, said merge policy comprising a set of specifications including syntax and semantics for expressing conflict resolution as of partially-ordered priorities and/or mutual-exclusion constraints;

c) translating said rulesets into a common core representation capable of being implemented in any logic program rule engine provided in a rule-based application at any location;

d) assimilating said rulesets to produce a new merged ruleset comprising logic required for resolving potential conflicts among rules in accordance with said merge policy, where said new merged ruleset is in a common core representation capable of being implemented in any logic program rule engine provided in a rule-based application at any location;

e) translating said new merged ruleset into one of said originating application's said rule format; and

f) communicating said translated new merged ruleset over said distributed network to the one of said originating applications.

Claim 2 (Original): The method according to Claim 1, wherein said assimilator device is employed to merge rulesets in two or more rule formats from two or more

originating applications and communicate the translated new merged ruleset to one of said originating applications.

Claim 3 (Original): The method according to Claim 1, wherein said assimilator device is employed for updating rules included in a first ruleset imported from a rules-editor device.

Claim 4 (Original): The method according to Claim 2, wherein said assimilating step includes applying one or more logic mechanisms in said merge policy for identifying conflicts and resolving conflicts among said rules.

Claim 5 (Original): The method according to Claim 2, wherein a logic mechanism includes a priority specification for expressing conflict resolution.

Claim 6 (Original): The method according to Claim 2, wherein a logic mechanism includes mutual exclusion constraints.

Claim 7 (Original): The method according to claim 2, wherein said core representation includes a courteous logic program.

Claim 8 (Original): The method according to Claim 2, wherein said distributed network is the Internet.

Claim 9 (Currently Amended): An assimilator system for merging two or more rulesets provided in rule-based systems associated with originating applications executing at different locations, each ruleset having rules implementing a policy in potential conflict with each other, said system comprising:

a communications network enabling the transmission and receipt of rulesets to be merged between said different locations;

a translator mechanism for translating each said ruleset from its rule format into a common core representation capable of being implemented in any logic program rule engine provided in a rule-based application at any location and for translating from said common core representation into each said originating application's rule format;

a conflict transformer mechanism for receiving each said ruleset and assimilating said rulesets to produce a new merged ruleset in accordance with a merge policy, said new merged ruleset merge policy comprising specification of statements including syntax and semantics for expressing conflict resolution as of a set of partially-ordered priorities and/or mutual-exclusion constraints that comprise logic required for resolving potential conflicts among rules; and,

device for translating said new merged ruleset into a common core representation capable of being implemented in any logic program rule engine provided in a rule-based application at any location.

Claim 10 (Original): The assimilator system as claimed in Claim 9, wherein said new merged ruleset is produced in said common core representation, said transforming device converting said new merged ruleset into one of said originating formats.

Claim 11 (Original): The assimilator system as claimed in Claim 9, wherein said merge policy includes one or more logic mechanisms for identifying and resolving conflicts among said rules.

Claim 12 (Original): The assimilator system as claimed in Claim 11, wherein a logic mechanism includes a priority specification for expressing conflict resolution.

Claim 13 (Original): The assimilator system as claimed in Claim 12, wherein a logic mechanism includes mutual exclusion constraints for expressing conflict resolution.

Claim 14 (Original): The assimilator system as claimed in Claim 9, wherein said communications network includes the Internet.

Claim 15 (Currently Amended): A program storage device readable by machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine to perform method steps for merging two rulesets provided in rule-based systems associated with originating applications executing at different locations, each ruleset comprising rules implementing a policy in potential conflict with each other, and each ruleset being in a different rule format, said method comprising:

a) communicating said rulesets to be merged over a distributed network to an assimilator service device for receiving each said ruleset;

b) providing a merge policy to said assimilator device, said merge policy comprising a set of specifications including syntax and semantics for expressing conflict resolution as of partially-ordered priorities and/or mutual-exclusion constraints;

c) translating said rulesets into a common core representation capable of being implemented in any logic program rule engine provided in a rule-based application at any location[.];

d) assimilating said rulesets to produce a new merged ruleset comprising logic required for resolving potential conflicts among rules in accordance with said merge policy, where said new merged ruleset is in a common core representation capable of being implemented in any logic program rule engine provided in a rule-based application at any location;

e) translating said new merged ruleset into one of said originating application's rule format; and

f) communicating said translated new merged ruleset over said distributed network to the one of originating applications.

Claim 16 (Original): The program storage device readable by machine as claimed in Claim 15, wherein said assimilator device is employed for updating rules included in a first ruleset imported from a rules-editor device.

Claim 17 (Original): The program storage device readable by machine as claimed in Claim 15, wherein after said assimilating step, a step of transforming said new merged ruleset from said common core representation back to an originating format.

Claim 18 (Original): The program storage device readable by machine as claimed in 15, wherein said assimilating step includes applying one or more logic mechanisms in said merge policy for identifying conflicts and resolving conflicts among said rules.